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CHICAGO'S FIFTEENTH ANNUAL ART EXHIBITION

The fifteenth annual exhibition of oil-paintings and sculpture by American artists recently closed at the Art Institute, Chicago, was in many respects the most interesting display offered by this institution

in recent years. One missed in the catalogue a number of familiar names usually found among the exhibitors, but the interesting work by new men and women of talent and promise, of whom the general public knows little, fully compensated for the lack of representation of more famous artists.

It is somewhat rare, it is true, for Abbey, Sargent, and Whistler to send their canvases to these annual exhibitions in Chicago, but Chase, Maurer, Shannon, Tanner, Cecilia Beaux, John Alexander, Alexander Harrison, and several other artists of note are usually represented. This year one found nothing from them in the galleries. This is the more surprising since it was thought that the institution of the N. W. Harris prize of five hundred dollars would be a bait at which



PORTRAIT
By Marie Gélon Cameron

many artists of international reputation would nibble.

This year the total number of exhibits was somewhat greater than in former displays. There were five hundred and twenty-four oil-paintings and nine pieces of sculpture. Of these works, two hundred and thirty-seven were chosen by juries of selection in New York and other American cities, and sixty-five came from Paris, being selected by Miss Sara Hallowell, the institute's Paris agent, principally from the two salons of the current year. Forty-three canvases came from

New York, forty from Philadelphia, seventeen from Boston, nineteen from Cincinnati, and one hundred and twelve were collected in Chicago. The aggregate number of works submitted to these five juries was five hundred and thirty.

A kind word should be said of the hanging committee, which did its work conscientiously and well, and which disposed of the great



A LITTLE STORY
By Mary Shepard Greene

variety of works accepted in such a way as to produce an harmonious and agreeable arrangement, in which there was little to criticise.

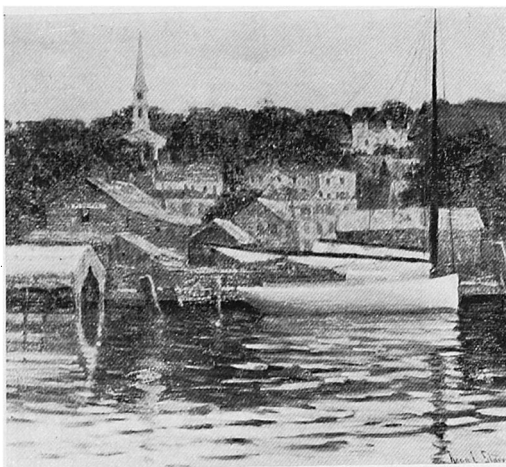
It speaks well for the standard set by the institution for its exhibitions that the pictures selected by the juries in this country were this year, as they usually have been, superior on the average to those forwarded by Miss Hollowell from Paris. It is probable that the institute's Paris agent has to take what she can get, and that the better canvases shown by American artists in the Paris salons do not thus find their way to Chicago. The surprising thing is, that some of the works brought from abroad should have been admitted to the salons at all. It is safe enough to say that if they had been submit-



EARLY MOONRISE
By Bertha S. Menzler

tending to the American juries they would have been uncere- moniously rejected. Still the product of these Paris studios displayed this year had a more uniform and a higher standard of excellence than on many a former occasion. Indeed, this uniformity of quality in the exhibition as a whole was one of the distinguishing traits of this year's collection. There was less morbidity of coloring than usual, fewer exhibitions of mere technical cleverness, a marked paucity of mere nakedness masquerading as studies of the nude, more inherent interest in the canvases from the picture standpoint pure and simple, more originality of aim and method and less slavish allegiance to the dictates of schools, more evidence of a conscientious effort to seek inspiration direct from nature and a correspondingly less witness of studio influences—hopeful characteristics.

It is also, perhaps, worthy of note that women came more strongly to the front than usual as exhibitors, fifty-two out of a total of two hundred and eighteen artists represented in the galleries being women. It should also be said, in justice to these exhibitors and in refutation of a more or less deep-seated prejudice, that the works shown by these female artists took rank on the whole



THE VILLAGE AT TWILIGHT
By Anna L. Stacey

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with those shown by their numerous male competitors.

The Harris prize of five hundred dollars, for the best work painted by an American artist within two years, was awarded to Walter McEwen, who passes by courtesy as a Chicagoan, though he has for years been a resident of Paris, for his "A Woman of the Empire," which was exhibited this year in the Paris Salon. This is the full-length figure of a young woman standing before a mirror which reflects the portrait with exquisite charm of effect. The work, which, by the way, has become one of the permanent possessions of the institute, is one which is remarkable for its unusual finish rather than for originality or force of conception. The idea is time-honored, and the pose and the disposition of draperies, graceful as they are, are no more noteworthy than in thousands of canvases that are yearly turned out from the studios. The fair model is certainly a gracious and brilliant example of womanhood; but after all, it is McEwen's consummate ability to represent textures and to produce a soft, harmonious effect that imparts charm to the canvas.

As an example of straightforward portraiture this picture to the minds of many had less to recommend it than two other full-length female figures, Lawton S. Parker's "Portrait of Mrs. W.," loaned for the occasion, and Karl Albert Buehr's "Reverie," which likewise was exhibited in the Paris Salon of this year. Parker's canvas relies



A WOMAN OF THE EMPIRE
By Walter McEwen

for its interest on no trick of brush work, no adventitious accessories. It is portraiture, pure and simple, and has no suggestion of being painted for exhibition purposes about it. It is an admirable example of straightforward work, and as such is in every way to be commended. Buehr's work likewise is direct and forceful, and has about it, moreover, the charm of poetic idea that suggests its title. These three canvases, with Frank W. Benson's well-known "Portrait of a Young Woman," the full-length portrait of a young woman with a stork in the background, hung in the same room, formed a notable quartet of pretentious examples of figure-painting, all notable in their several ways and offering an interesting opportunity for comparison of ideas and methods.

That the Harris prize was wisely bestowed would doubtless be the opinion of the rank and file of visitors. Many competent judges, however, would prefer to have seen the prize go to Parker or Buehr for the canvases referred to. As regards the awarding of the Cahn prize of one hundred dollars, many likewise were disappointed, and perhaps justly. It was won for the second time by Anna L. Stacey with a small landscape, called "The Village at Twilight." This painting is agreeable in its qualities, and is broad and free in its handling, depicting a little portion of the village, with a river in the foreground reflecting the roseate hues of early evening. But one fails to see in the picture anything, either in conception, treatment, or coloring, that would mark it as a prize-winner.

A more important canvas, and at the same time a better example of fine, straightforward painting, is Marie Gélon Cameron's "Portrait of American Diplomat at the Court of Korea," and there was general disappointment that this really excellent bit of portraiture was not awarded the Cahn prize. This is by all odds the most important work Mrs. Cameron has done. The portrait of Mr. Goward is excellent, the pose is natural and dignified, the rendering of textures is exceptionally good, and it would not be fulsome praise to say that this picture held its own with the best examples of portraiture in the galleries, including Gari Melchers's fine portrait of Charles L. Hutchinson.

Of course within the limits of a short article it is only possible to give a cursory and general review of the extensive collection. Not a few of the pictures it would, perhaps, be a kindness to leave unmentioned. Others—as, for instance, Edward Simmons's "Tired Out," which was painted over twenty years ago, and which captured a two-thousand-dollar prize when exhibited at the American Art Association in New York; Edmund C. Tarbell's "The Venetian Blind" and Ellen Wetherald Ahrens's "Sewing," both of which were prize-winners at Pittsburg; Charles H. Davis's "Summer Clouds," shown at the Pan-American and elsewhere; Elliott Daingerfield's "Holy Family"; and several other pictures—are old favorites

and have frequently been exploited. To dwell upon the one class would be folly, and to give space to the other would be a needless repetition. Indeed, it is to be doubted if description or criticism of pictures in print is not a gratuitous and thankless undertaking. Those who have seen the works do not need the description, those who have not can form no idea from a verbal account of the quality of the performances, and criticism apart from the thing criticised is



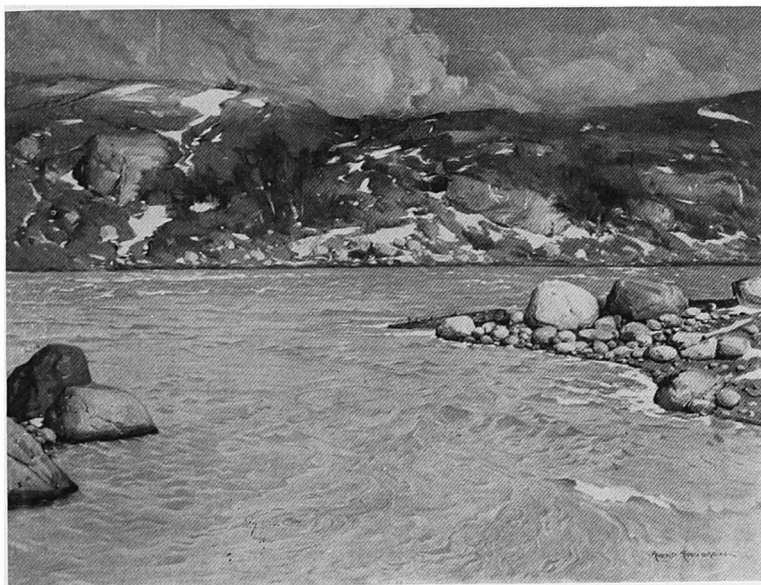
SEWING—A PORTRAIT
By Ellen Wetherald Ahrens

apt to be meaningless. A few more or less general remarks, however, may be permissible, respecting certain artists and their work.

Henry George Keller showed two animal pictures deserving of attention, one representing a pair of white horses resting in the shade, and the other two goats grazing, in both of which the coloring and atmosphere were admirable. J. Alden Wier's "A New England Factory Village" was charmingly composed, and lacked the washed-out, ashy appearance of many of his landscapes, and Louis Paul Dessar's "Autumn" was notable for the richness of its tone. Charles Warren Eaton exhibited six canvases depicting Old World scenes, steeped, as is the wont of this artist's pictures, in the golden hues of



BLOSSOM TIME IN NORMANDY
By Mary Macmonnies



AFTER SPRING RAINS
By Svend Svendsen

evening, and all excellent alike in subject and execution. One cannot give unstinted praise to Gustave Henry Mosler's enormous canvas, "The Wounded Cow," since it is difficult to see why a theme of this sort considered from any artistic standpoint could furnish excuse for covering a fair fraction of an acre with paint of varied hue.

Bror Julius Olsson-Nordfeldt, a Swede domiciled in Chicago, and a new-comer to the exhibition, showed an exceptionally pleasing and refined picture in "Resting," depicting a young girl in black reclining on a studio couch; and Edward Dufner, a salon portrait of more than ordinary interest on account of its rich tonal qualities. J. Francis Murphy's "October Fog," with its peculiar aerial effect and its note of accentuation in the form of a single tree in the foreground; Sargent Kendall's "A Fairy Tale," with its transparency of color and its fine decorative lines; and Childe Hassam's exceptionally good example of impressionistic landscape, unfortunately skied over a doorway—were all canvases that commanded attention by their intrinsic excellence. Bertha S. Menzler's single contribution, "Early Moonrise," showed the same elusive and artificial atmospheric qualities that have characterized many of her recent works, and Walter Marshall Clute's "The Dunes," "The Rain," and "A Dutch Girl" were no less creations of pure imagination. In marked contrast with these were two small, direct, but



THE MINER
By Charles J. Mulligan

poetic, landscapes by Charles Francis Browne, unpretentious scenes, but canvases which recommended themselves by their essential truth.

One may say here in passing, that the more sane the artist is in conception, and the less ambitious he is for unusual effects, the more his



REVERIE

By Karl Albert Buehr

works conform to the taste and elicit the admiration of the public. This was especially noticeable in the exhibition. Birge Harrison's group of simple, poetic subjects of snow time, Leonard Ochtman's tranquil study, "Morning Symphony," Charles Abel Corwin's Gloucester scenes, Henry W. Ranger's fascinating "The Blossoming Oak," F. K. Rehn's "The Vasty Deep," and other canvases more earnest and sincere than ambitious, were of incomparably more interest than Eric Pape's sensational picture, "The Foaming Surges," with its sporting mermaids, or Lionel Walden's "A Summer Day," with its five nude bathers, who were neither graceful nor interesting.

One can scarcely understand why artists indulge their fancy and waste their time on these pretentious, out-of-the-way performances, which have no destination, and which can subserve no purpose save

that of personal advertisement in a current exhibition. It is the picture of reasonable size, that has a content of poetic thought, the picture that is usable outside of a public institution, that has naturalness, directness, character, that is marked by truth rather than by ambitious enterprise, which appeals to the cultured public and serves as the best exemplar of the artist's abilities. We can well spare the rest.

Without further citation of names or reference to individual

works, I may mention a peculiarity of this year's exhibition which forced itself upon the attention of every one accustomed to attend these annual events, I refer to the large number of artists who were represented by only one work. Over one-half the entire number of exhibiting artists were thus represented by a single picture, and of the rest comparatively few had more than two canvases in the galleries. Formerly it was not unusual for an artist to have five or six, or eight or ten, or even more pictures hung. This doubtless is the reason why, to use a phrase more forceful than elegant, there was so much new blood in the exhibition.

If this were a matter of design on the part of the juries of admission, it is a policy to be commended. It gives the young men and women of promise, but little reputation, an opportunity which they deserve, and which many of them have not had in former years. These annual exhibitions are or should be the harvest of the best efforts of the men and women worthy of being represented, and it is manifestly better to have one, or at most two canvases, the best of the year, from each artist than to crowd out a number of worthy aspirants, and to limit the number of exhibitors and multiply the number of exhibits by permitting a few artists to have virtually one-man shows for sale purposes.

Certainly the galleries of the institute were never so rich as they were this year in works by people of promise about whom the art-loving public knows little and wishes to know more. It is desirable, of course, that sales in these annual events should not only be permit-



PORTRAIT
By Lawton S. Parker



A GIRL
By Martha S. Baker



THE VENETIAN BLIND
By Edmund C. Tarbell

ted but encouraged, but primarily the purpose of the exhibition should be, not to effect sales, but to show the ability and development of the contributing artists. From this standpoint, the exhibition of this year was one of the most successful, if not the most successful, ever given by the institution.

In connection with this fifteenth exhibition, Will H. Low made probably the most thoroughly representative display of his work he has ever made, consisting of one hundred and forty drawings, sketches, cartoons, and easel-pictures—works in wash, crayon, water-color, and oil. This show, however, was separate and distinct from the general exhibition, though the pictures exhibited were listed in the catalogue. Features of the display were the monochrome illustrations for Keats's "Lamia" and "The Odes and Sonnets," and the original studies for the celebrated decorations of the ball-room of the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York. These, with various other studies and cartoons, and with a fine selection of the artist's easel-pictures, made an exhibition of unusual interest, showing as it did the artist's wonderful gift of decorative drawing and his fine sense of delicate and harmonious coloring.

JAMES FORD BUELL.



PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG LADY
Miniature by Lucia Fairchild Fuller